

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Please amend claims 3, 4, 7, 9-14, 16, 17, 19, 23 and 24, add new claims 25 and 26, and cancel claims 1, 8 and 18.

1. (Canceled).
2. (Canceled).
3. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[1]] 25, where the segmented surface comprises two or more segments.
4. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[1]] 25, where the segmented surface comprises three or more segments.
5. (Canceled).
6. (Canceled).
7. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[1]] 25, wherein the dilating tip is generally funnel-shaped.
8. (Canceled).
9. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[1]] 25, wherein the generally rigid tube of the dilating tip has a length ranging from about 2 mm to about 6 mm.

10. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[1]] 25, wherein the generally rigid tube of the dilating tip has a length ranging from about 3 mm to about 5 mm.

11. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[1]] 25, wherein the generally rigid tube of the dilating tip has an outer diameter ranging from about 0.6 mm to about 1 mm.

12. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[1]] 25, wherein the generally rigid tube of the dilating tip has an outer diameter ranging from about 0.7 mm to about 0.8 mm.

13. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[1]] 25, wherein the dilating tip comprises nitinol.

14. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[1]] 25, further comprising a wire extending proximally from the dilating tip to near the proximal end of the tubular body to effect proximal movement of the dilating tip relative to the tubular body.

15. (Original) A device according to claim 14, further comprising a slidable member on the proximal end of the tubular body, the slidable member being connected to the wire so that proximal movement of the slidable member pulls the wire and causes proximal movement of the dilating tip relative to the tubular body.

16. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim 15, further comprising a latch for maintaining the position of the slidable member relative to the tubular body when the dilating tip is in [[an]] the open arrangement configuration.

17. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[1]] 25, further comprising a pressure valve at or near the proximal end of the tubular body.

18. (Canceled).

19. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[18]] 26, wherein the slidable member is connected to the ring of the dilating tip by a wire having a distal end attached to the ring of the dilating tip and a proximal end attached to the slidable member; wherein proximal movement of the slidable member pulls the wire and causes proximal movement of the dilating tip relative to the tubular body.

20. (Canceled).

21. (Canceled).

22. (Canceled).

23. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[18]] 26, further comprising a latch for maintaining the position of the slidable member relative to the tubular body when the dilating tip is in [[an]] the open arrangement configuration.

24. (Currently Amended) A device according to claim [[18]] 26, further comprising a pressure valve at or near the proximal end of the tubular body.

25. (New) A device comprising:

an elongated, generally flexible tubular body; and

a dilating tip slidably mounted on a distal end of the tubular body and comprising:

a segmented surface comprising a plurality of segments having proximal and distal ends, wherein the plurality of segments is configured to move between a closed

configuration in which the segments combine to form the segmented surface and an open configuration in which the segments separate from one another;

a plurality of generally rigid tube segments, each tube segment extending distally from a segment of the segmented surface, and wherein, when the plurality of segments is in the closed configuration, the plurality of tube segments combine to form a generally rigid tube having a sharp distal end configured to puncture tissue; and

a ring slidably mounted to the tubular body, wherein the distal ends of the segments of the segmented surface are hingedly attached to the ring;

wherein proximal movement of the ring relative to the tubular body exerts a force on the segmented surface to thereby open the segmented surface.

26. (New) A device comprising:

an elongated, generally flexible tubular body;

a dilating tip slidably mounted on a distal end of the tubular body and comprising:

a ring mounted in surrounding relation to the distal end of the tubular body;

a segmented surface comprising three or more segments, each segment being hingedly attached to the ring, wherein the three or more segments are configured to move between a closed configuration in which the segments combine to form the segmented surface and an open configuration in which the segments separate from one another; and

three or more generally rigid tube segments, each tube segment extending distally from one of the three or more segments of the segmented surface, wherein when the three or more segments are in the closed configuration, the three or more generally rigid tube segments combine to form a generally rigid tube having a sharp distal end configured to puncture tissue;

a slidable member connected to the ring of the dilating tip, wherein proximal movement of the slidable member relative to the tubular body exerts a force on the segmented surface and the generally rigid tube to thereby open the segmented surface and the generally rigid tube.